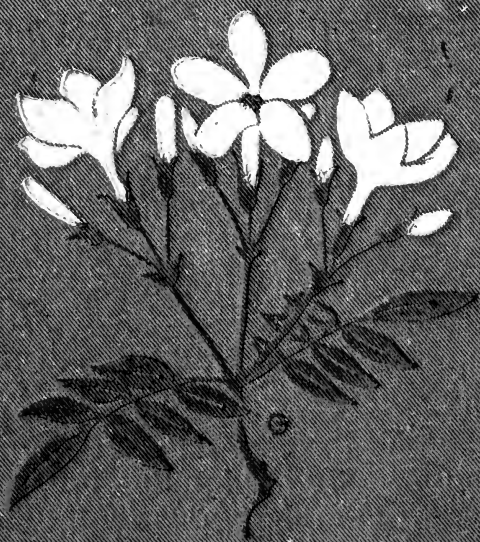




3 3433 07952836 4

HOW "BEAUTY"
WAS SAVED
AND OTHER MEMORIES
OF THE SIXTIES
MRS. JAMES MADISON WASHINGTON



ON,

Louisiana - Hist., 1803-1805.

AH

1K1

10-11-12

HOW BEAUTY WAS SAVED



How Beauty Was Saved

*And Other Memories
of the Sixties*

BY

MRS. JAMES MADISON WASHINGTON

(*Mrs. A. A. Washington*)

NEW YORK AND WASHINGTON
THE NEALE PUBLISHING COMPANY

1907

996133A

COPYRIGHT, 1907, BY
THE NEALE PUBLISHING COMPANY

To
SOUTHERN GIRLS

CONTENTS

HOW BEAUTY WAS SAVED . . .	9
THE TELLTALE GLOVES . . .	23
THE MAGIC SIGN . . .	31
A LABOR OF LOVE . . .	39
THE "JAYHAWKERS" . . .	51
MEMORIES OF SLAVE DAYS . . .	59
A NARROW ESCAPE . . .	67

*Green and golden memories
Of the thrilling time
When hearts and hands were true as steel
In our sunny Southern clime.*

A. A. W.

HOW BEAUTY WAS SAVED

HOW BEAUTY WAS SAVED

IN the summer of 1862, in the Bayou Manchac country near Baton Rouge, Louisiana, there was a modest little schoolhouse called the "Dove's Nest." To that school came two young girls to complete a course of study begun in Baton Rouge before the Federals captured that city.

The country was visited quite often by bands of Confederates, "Jay-hawkers," and Federals; the slaves on the vast sugar plantations were in a demoralized condition from being so near the enemy's lines; yet the girls braved all these dangers, and rode on horseback (both on the same horse)

12 *How Beauty Was Saved*

three miles through forest and field to attend school. They had no fear, for both could shoot a pistol, and always carried a loaded one, and a small Spanish dirk for self-protection. All the valuable horses on the plantation having been given to the Confederate army, only two were left for family use, an old one, not of much service, and a young beautiful bay, the individual property of one of the girls.

This horse the girls rode to school. Naturally he had a shambling, uncomfortable gait, but the girls determined to teach him to pace, which they did by the use of a small steel spur.

The days sped on, the year blushed into spring, bloomed into summer, and the girls grew accustomed to meeting bands of the "Blue and the Gray," sometimes riding along only

fifty yards apart, yet totally ignorant of the fact. The girls narrowly missed being shot on one occasion, as some soldiers were firing down the road for practice, and the bullets whistled near their heads as they turned a curve in the lane. The booming of cannon could be heard from the Mississippi River; now and then a friend was killed in a roadside skirmish; loved ones were captured and imprisoned; but the little school was undisturbed outwardly, though thrilled with anxiety and patriotism for the beloved Southland.

When the days grew too long and hot for study, the earnest little teacher decided to close the term with a thorough, old-fashioned examination, and a modest exhibition.

The neighborhood had been quiet for some weeks and no one feared a

14 *How Beauty Was Saved*

visit from the enemy. The "Dove's Nest" was prettily decorated, a piano moved in, and all made ready. The day of the exhibition dawned bright and fair, the woods were full of flowers, and nature seemed to laugh in the glad sunshine. The two girls arrived early, and one of them decided to ride to a friend's home a mile beyond, for a basket of fresh roses; she told her friend, the owner of Beauty, of her intention, then sprang into the saddle and rode away.

When she reached the house she noticed a horse and buggy under an old oak near by. She knew it belonged to an old bachelor who was slightly deaf (else he would have been in the Southern army), and that he had come to take the little teacher to the schoolhouse. When she dismounted she fastened her horse un-

der the same tree, in full view of the road. The house was surrounded by spacious grounds, some distance from the main road, and a broad avenue led up to it from a large outer gate. The flowers were soon gathered, and after a chat with her friends, the girl started back, when someone cried, "Just look at the Yankees!"

Sure enough, the house was surrounded and a company was stationed at the big gate. The family stood together on the piazza, pale with fear, for they never knew what would happen in those troublous times. The officer in command told them that they were in need of fresh horses to make a raid, and had orders to "press" any into service that they could find. Turning to a soldier he said, "Take that horse from the buggy, saddle him and see if he is

16 *How Beauty Was Saved*

fit for use." This caused the girl some uneasiness about her friend's horse, but she hoped the side-saddle would save him, as it had done when the Southern army were pressing horses. Anxiously she waited and listened. When the man returned, the Colonel said, "Try the other one." The girl was trembling now; the horse was not hers, it was the only one the family with whom she boarded could use to send to mill, or for a physician in case of illness; and she felt that she could not give him up without an effort to save him.

"Surely, sir, you are not going to take a schoolgirl's horse for the Federal Government!" He smiled and asked her if she could swear that the horse was hers. She told him no, the horse belonged to a schoolgirl friend. He looked incredulous and said that

he suspected it belonged to a rebel soldier; and, bowing an apology, again spoke to the man, "Try that horse." Like a flash a thought came to the girl. She would not plead or beg,—she was too proud for that,—but she said:

"Colonel, let me try him for you."

"Very well," he replied, much amused. "Bring him up, Lieutenant." The girl had no time or chance to ask advice from anyone; but she *wore the sharp steel spur*. The Colonel politely offered to assist her in the saddle, but she sprang up without touching his hand. Dressed in white muslin, with braided hair looped back with pink rosebuds; without gloves, hat or riding skirt, she slowly started down the avenue in front of the house. She let the horse shamble along in the ugly way he liked until

18 *How Beauty Was Saved*

he reached the large gate where the company of soldiers were stationed. They looked surprised to see her riding down alone on one of the horses they had stopped to take, but thinking it must be all right, as the Colonel was in view, they lined up, saluted respectfully, and let her pass out. When she was beyond the last guard, she said, "Now, Beauty, fly!" and, as she used the spur freely, they did fly. For some distance they were in full view of the Colonel and her friends who stood waiting on the piazza for her return, then a curve in the road put her out of sight.

In a few minutes she heard the clatter of hoofs behind her, but as the road was hard, dry and level, and she knew every foot of it, she hoped to outrun her pursuers. Glancing back she saw two soldiers splendidly

mounted tearing after her. The "Dove's Nest" was in sight now, but the soldiers were gaining ground. She could hear the clanking of swords, the rattle of spurs, and the hoof beats. On she flew, faster and faster, for Beauty seemed to feel, with the rider, that an enemy was after them. The schoolyard gate was wide open, and she dashed through it and up to the porch where an eager, startled bevy of girls were assembled. She jumped off quickly and called to her friend, "Here is your horse. The Yankees are after him!"

Just then the men rode up, very red, very angry, and somewhat scared, for they were in dense woods over a mile from their command. They ordered the girl to get back on that horse and return to the Colonel.

20 *How Beauty Was Saved*

She told them that she would not do anything of the kind; she was a Southern girl, not subject to Federal orders, and that they could not compel her to return. The owner of the horse said she would go with them, but they insisted on the girl who ran away going, too. This she refused to do, and she told them if they did not want to be captured by the Southern boys, they had better not linger.

This had the desired effect, and the girl who owned the horse, taking a small child behind her, rode back with the soldiers. When she arrived, the Colonel was surprised to see a different girl on the horse and to know that his men did not overtake the other one. The owner of Beauty was very pretty, very eloquent and spirited, and she could swear that the horse was hers, and prove it by people pres-

How Beauty Was Saved 21

ent, so the Colonel allowed her to keep the horse. Her friend was greatly relieved, and all rejoiced that Beauty was not surrendered to the Federal Government to make a raid on our own dear soldier boys! This is a true story, for the writer was the runaway.

THE TELLTALE GLOVES

THE TELLTALE GLOVES

THE Federals having left, and Beauty being safe, we proceeded with our exercises that summer day at the "Dove's Nest." We passed a good examination, and just as we were singing our gayest songs a party of Confederates rode up. They tied their horses to the windows and doors, came in, and enjoyed the little concert. After the last melody had died away and the shades of evening were falling, we rode slowly homeward, each girl with a soldier boy beside her.

One of the soldiers, in particular, was a reckless, daring young man, who had shot at the Federals from

26 *How Beauty Was Saved*

ambush many times, had captured some of their horses, and was quite a terror to the raiders. His father's home was in that neighborhood, and the Federals were trying to capture him.

Now, when the boys—for they were only boys—left us at the gate this particular one forgot his gloves—left them on a gate post. We found them, took them into the house, and threw them carelessly on the hall table. There were no millinery stores, in fact no stores of any kind in the country, so the girls, for riding hats, wore boys' hats, with a plume jauntily pinned on the side. We took our hats off and laid them on the table *by the gloves*. The boy's nickname, "Little Dare Devil," was on the inside of the buckskin cuffs, but we had not noticed it.

That night we were aroused from sleep by the barking of dogs, the rattling of sabers and spurs. We knew, as soon as we were well awake, that the Federals were in the house, and, slipping on our wrappers, we ran to mother's room, for we could hear them beating on our doors. We were dreadfully frightened, for there was an unfinished suit of Confederate gray in the house, and we knew that if it was found the house would be burned to ashes. Mother, who had the suit in her room, would not "strike a light" until the suit was concealed, and the pelican buttons slipped into her pocket.

The Federals kept calling loudly for *light*, and we heard them burst into our room, saying, "Here they are, boys! The bed is right warm! Be quick!" We knew, then, that

28 *How Beauty Was Saved*

they were looking for Confederate soldiers.

The house was searched from garret to cellar, but, finding no one except members of the family, the intruders hurriedly departed. Next morning our hats and gloves were missing, having been taken from the hall table. A few days after this the Federals were out again, but this time in daylight. One of the officers came in the house and asked for a drink of water. While waiting for it to be drawn cool and fresh from the well (for Southerners were courteous to an enemy when he stood upon their threshold), he seemed disposed to chat with the girls.

“We came very near catching those fellows the other night,” he said; “we got their hats and gloves, and saw their blankets on the floor.

Where in the world did they hide, young ladies?"

We were very indignant; and told him that no Southern soldier would sleep in a private house so near the enemy's lines, and thus endanger the lives and property of his relatives and friends. We said that the hats *were ours*, and we would like them returned, and that the roll of blankets was used by a little colored girl who slept in the house, which fact they would have discovered if they had not been nearly scared to death. The officer looked astonished and seemed somewhat ashamed of the whole affair, but some of them did not believe us, for they rode away laughing about the *name inside the gloves*.

THE MAGIC SIGN

THE MAGIC SIGN

I HAVE come to destroy your tannery and burn down your house."

The officer spoke calmly, and my father did not answer for a moment.

After school closed I had returned to my home, which was about nine miles from the Federal lines. We had a small, rude tannery, for our family, including the servants, was quite large, and, as there was no place to get shoes in that part of Louisiana, my father employed a shoemaker and tanned his own leather. Our home was beautiful, with spacious grounds around it, and every nook and corner was dear to us. A clear winding

34 *How Beauty Was Saved*

stream ran nearly around the plantation, and on the river was our "primitive" tannery. We had all been supplied with hard yellow shoes (the first tan-colored shoes we had ever seen, which we were much ashamed of), and there were some hides left.

My father, hearing one day that the report had been carried to Baton Rouge that he was tanning leather for the Southern army, anticipated trouble, fearing the loss of his precious leather. He decided the best thing he could do would be to hide it in some secret place. He was afraid to trust the servants,—for while some were faithful, others were not,—so he told the two youngest girls of his plan, and asked them to help him store away his valuable leather.

When the servants were all asleep

in their cottages, we three, father and two young girls, dragged those things to the house, then upstairs, and into a long, dark closet. The house was two and a half stories high, so there was quite a space under the roof. We conquered our dread of dark, dust, spiders, and mice, and climbed up into the space just under the roof. Father handed up the hides to us and we hid them carefully and with many frights from imaginary terrors. After all was done we came down, closed the narrow little door, hung some dresses over it, and awaited future action on the part of the enemy.

Sure enough, in a day or two the Federals came. Before we knew it the house was entirely surrounded by troops. The officer dismounted and knocked at the door. He asked to see

36 *How Beauty Was Saved*

my father, who met him at the hall door.

“Sir,” he said, “I am informed that you are tanning leather, and making boots for the Confederate army. I have come to destroy your tannery and burn down your house. Take your family out immediately.”

My father, my aged mother, and we, his daughters, who had enjoyed and loved the beautiful home so long, were speechless for a moment, and pale with fear. Then father said, slowly, “The report is false. We have a rude tannery, but only for home use,” and begged him to spare the sacred old place. The Colonel said that he must search the house and see if any evidence could be found against us, and, taking several well-armed soldiers with him, he went through every room.

Of course we could not follow them, but we anxiously waited for their return. The Colonel must have been touched by our mute grief, but he only said, "I have orders to burn the house, and though I find no proof against you, I must obey orders." Then father asked him to step out on the veranda. They talked a few minutes, clasped hands, and the Colonel, quickly wheeling around, ordered the troops out of the house. In a few minutes every one was in line and rapidly marching away. In answer to our astonished inquiries, we were told that a Masonic sign, the secret of true brotherhood, had saved our dear home from desolating flames.

A LABOR OF LOVE

A LABOR OF LOVE

ONE day a little girl was reading a story-book on the green lawn in front of a Southern home; two gentlemen were seated near under a wide-spreading magnolia tree talking about the political situation, the number of Presidential candidates, and the possible results of the election. Suddenly one of them said, "Yes, there is trouble ahead. Before that child is grown this country will be plunged into bloody war." The child was startled. The prophetic words were indelibly stamped on her mind. She could not sleep until long after midnight, and when she slept she dreamed that she, like the "Maid of

42 *How Beauty Was Saved*

Monterey," gave food and water to the thirsty soldiers, and dressed their bleeding wounds.

The dream came true. While she was attending school in the capital city, talk of secession began, and then came preparations for war. I remember the day the arsenal at Baton Rouge was seized by Louisiana, and all the citizens and the college girls marched down to the barracks on the river to see our soldiers drill. The women and girls went to work making clothes and little conveniences for the soldiers to take with them. In a few weeks we were thrilled with enthusiasm when our first companies marched through the city with their knapsacks, blankets, and a half loaf of bread strapped on their backs. Poor boys, they lived to learn that "a half loaf is better than none."

Some time after two companies * were camped near us on the Comite River, and real work began. How young and brave the soldiers were, and how proud every woman was who had a son, brother, or sweetheart in the army! For a time all was excitement, gaiety, and preparation; bands played, soldiers drilled, and citizens flocked to the camps to encourage and help in every way possible. One sad day orders came to move to the front. Knapsacks were packed, tents were folded, the last good-byes were spoken, tears fell softly but were dashed away, and our boys were gone—gone to meet their fate, whatever it might be!

Soon after came the hard times. Luxuries were given up, privation was felt in every home, but no one

* Bynum's and Buffington's.

44 *How Beauty Was Saved*

complained. People seemed proud to endure, and often met to exchange opinions and plans as to how to "make something out of nothing," as they expressed it. Old looms were brought out and repaired, and the spinning wheels were put to work. Flour, tea, coffee, and even salt ceased to be used on the family table. From the smoke-houses, where the salt meats had dripped for years, the salt-soaked earth was taken up, boiled in a vessel, the salt extracted, and dried in the sun. Sweet potatoes were sliced thin, cut in little pieces, browned in an oven, ground in a coffee mill, and a breakfast drink made from them. It looked like coffee, it was not injurious, so it was cheerfully taken in place of fragrant Mocha. Okra seed, parched corn meal, and parched peanuts were also used for

making a morning drink. "Confederate cake" was made by sifting corn meal through a sieve, and then through cloth. Rice was harvested, and husked in a wooden mortar, a work which required time and strength. All dress-goods became scarce—calico was \$4 per yard and very hard to get. Jaunty dresses were made of coarse yellow domestic, piped with bright colors. No hats could be purchased, but stylish turbans were made of old straw covered with scraps of black silk or velvet, and were worn with pride, and called "Beauregard" hats. This recalls a song that was very popular in Louisiana during the war. It is a wee bit touching to read it over now, for the Southern girls, daintily reared, sadly missed their fine linen, their soft silks and sheer muslins. The song

46 *How Beauty Was Saved*

was sung to the air of "The Bonny Blue Flag."

"Oh, yes, I am a Southern girl,
I glory in the name,
And boast it with far greater pride
Than glittering wealth or fame.

"I envy not the Northern girl,
Her robes of beauty rare;
Though diamonds grace her snowy neck
And pearls bedeck her hair.

"My homespun dress is plain, I know,
My hat's palmetto, too,
But then it shows what Southern girls
For Southern Rights will do."

The war dragged on. New Orleans fell. Baton Rouge was in the hands of the enemy. Some of the Baton Rouge people refuged to the country, living in churches, schoolhouses and deserted log cabins; others were compelled to remain, as they had no shelter and no means of living out-

side of the city. Then followed the sieges on the Mississippi River, Port Hudson, and Vicksburg. Night after night and all day long we could hear the heavy guns booming and the deadly shells hissing, and we had no means of knowing how our armies were faring. I remember the sad and anxious dread which came over me every time a gun was fired, and how I covered my head with pillows to shut out the fearful sound.

One day in August the news came that Gen. John C. Breckinridge was on his way to attack Baton Rouge; that his army of less than three thousand were tired and in need of food, and would be glad if the citizens would send out something to the road on which they were marching. Every family in the country began to prepare food; quantities of green

48 *How Beauty Was Saved*

corn, potatoes, vegetables, egg-bread, chickens, in fact, everything that could be had was cooked, packed in baskets, and carried out to meet the army.

General Breckinridge pitched camp on the Comite River. On a foggy morning, August 5, the battle was fought. Historians have told all about the short, desperate battle. I remember the great disappointment that was expressed, and how people wondered why the *Arkansas* did not do her part on the river, where the enemy's three gunboats made such havoc. We did not know that she was lying, entirely disabled, only four miles away. After the battle the sick and wounded were taken to Greenwell Springs, a pretty little summer resort near us, where a hospital was established, mattresses being laid on

the floors of the parlors and dining-room of the hotel. Southern women then proved their love and devotion to their country's defenders. Every day buggies, drays, and carts went to the Springs, loaded with jellies, soups, and every delicate thing that we could make with our limited means. The surgeons had no lint to dress the wounds, so we went home, tore our finest linen sheets and table cloths into strips, and with sharp knives scraped them into fine, soft lint, for linen makes much better lint than plain cotton.

During this time General Breckinridge, who was a very handsome man, visited our home and dined with us several times. On one occasion, just after a charming dinner with the General and several of his staff as guests, a heavy storm gathered. The

50 *How Beauty Was Saved*

rain fell in torrents all the afternoon. My parents urged the guests to spend the night as it was so dark and threatening, but the General said, "While it is a great temptation to enjoy for a few hours the comforts of a home, duty calls me to my camp and my boys."

We learned to enjoy our "labor of love," and memory treasures Greenwell Springs as a sacred spot where hands, heads, and hearts were used freely in the service of our beloved Southland.

THE “JAYHAWKERS”

THE "JAYHAWKERS" *

ON New Year's Day, 1862, one of the coldest days ever known in Louisiana, we were all seated around a bright wood fire talking as usual of the war, and of our absent boys. All were gone to the front—not a man was left, except my father, an aged clergyman. As we talked, we were startled by the furious barking of dogs, the tramp of horses, and a loud "Hello" at the front gate. When the door was opened we saw about twenty or twenty-five men muffled up to their eyes, muffled quite beyond recognition.

* "Jayhawkers" were bands of deserters and outlaws that kept in hiding from both armies and preyed upon helpless citizens.

54 *How Beauty Was Saved*

The men were riding miserable ponies, and they looked dreadful in their disguise, and seemed numb with cold.

Father answered the call, and asked what was wanted. The man in front replied that they were "Government officials"; that they had come to search the house, as they had heard it contained contraband articles and smuggled goods. We knew that there was not a shadow of truth in the statement, so my father asked to see the Government order. "You need not trouble about that, we have it all right!" replied the leader. Then they pushed their way into the hall, the parlor, the bedrooms, and all over the house, opening trunks, bureau drawers, desks, and closets. They took every yard of cloth they could find and everything

that looked new or valuable, piling them on the front piazza. Toilet articles, ladies' underwear, everything!

My brother was a physician, at that time a surgeon in a Louisiana regiment, and we had quite a collection of jars and bottles of medicine that had been left over, among them a bottle of quinine valued at one hundred dollars, and prized above gold or silver. This medicine they found, and, sneering and jeering, placed it with other things. When they had gone through every room, they went to the old-fashioned smoke-house in the yard, where the home-cured meat, the corn meal and other such things were kept, broke open the door and entered.

Hidden away there was a small demi-john of whiskey, kept for medicinal purposes, and a box of sugar, kept also for the sick and suffering.

56 *How Beauty Was Saved*

When they found that, the men went wild with glee, and they ran, shouting, to the kitchen for cups and were soon drinking the fiery liquid. We stood looking on in agony,—the old father, the physician's wife, two young girls, and several small children,—all helpless, at the mercy of a band of drunken outlaws, two miles from any help!

After they had swallowed every drop, and felt warmed and cheered by the whiskey, they came out and began to talk about the sad duty of obeying "Government orders." We then told them that the report they had heard was false; that all the things they had collected on the piazza were in the house when the war broke out, and that we could prove it by the Home Guards, who would probably be along soon from their

camp near by. Of course, this was a ruse resorted to in our desperation, but it had a magical effect. The men ran to their horses, mounted in haste, and dashed off through the woods in a wild gallop. Oh! what a relief, and how thankful we were! The goods were left on the piazza floor, quinine, clothing and all. They never came again, but the fear of their return never left us by night or day, until the war was over.

MEMORIES OF SLAVE DAYS

MEMORIES OF SLAVE DAYS

ROWS and rows of white-washed cottages constituted the "quarters," with narrow streets between them, many of the little homes adorned with bright-hued, old-fashioned flowers in the front yards, or with potato and melon patches.

On cold winter evenings bright firelight shone from every door and window. Inside, the father sitting in the chimney corner, smoking his pipe while he deftly wove white-oak splints into cotton baskets; the mother, mending, or knitting, while the fat little darkies tumbled about on the floor, or danced to the music of Uncle Tom's fiddle.

62 *How Beauty Was Saved*

The slaves were well fed, well clothed, well housed, and when ill they were well nursed, and attended by a good doctor.

Their houses were warmed by fires in broad fireplaces, fires which they kept burning all night.

They had gay "Sunday-go-to-meetin' clothes," and they generally went to church, either to the "white folkses' church," where an upper gallery was provided for them, or to their own special service.

If a planter allowed his slaves to be mistreated in any way, he and his family were ostracized from society, and made to feel the disapprobation of their neighbors. So general was this method of administering rebuke that it seemed to be an unwritten law throughout the South.

Sometimes, as it often happens to-

day, an overseer of quick or ungovernable temper would be severe in punishing an offender; but he soon lost his place and a kinder man was employed in his stead.

Somewhere in the "quarters" a large nursery was situated, and there the babies and small children were cared for by the old women while their mothers worked in the cotton-fields.

White children were taught to treat the grown-up servants with respect, and as they could not say "Mrs." or "Mr.," they called them "aunt" or "uncle." On Sunday afternoons the white children were often sent to read the Bible to the old colored people, and the children thought it quite an honor. If any of the house servants wanted to learn to read, they were taught, though after

the war we heard this was against the law. We never knew it!

Half of every Saturday was given to "the hands" to "clean up," tend their garden, or go fishing, as they chose. From ten days' to two weeks' holiday was given at Christmas time, and a jolly good time they had—balls, parties, and weddings galore! The white family and their guests would be cordially invited down, and they always enjoyed the festivities. *Noblesse oblige* was recognized everywhere, and we felt bound to treat kindly the class dependent upon us. Young ladies parted with many a handsome gown or ribbon because their maids wanted them and boldly asked for them. We simply could not refuse, and they knew it.

The faithfulness and devotion of the slaves has been written of by his-

torians, and they deserve all praise, for many of them were noble and self-sacrificing. After the war many of them remained at the old homestead with their former owners, as long as they could be provided for, and when poverty compelled a separation, they left the homestead with sorrow.

We of the South are glad and thankful that the negroes are free. We would not have them in bondage again if we could. "*Social equality*" *can never exist in the South*, but the race can be, and many of them are, well educated, happy and prosperous: living in peace and harmony with their white neighbors, who are, and have been for many years paying taxes to educate them.

It is the "floating" class of colored people that cause the trouble we

66 *How Beauty Was Saved*

read about in the daily papers. Those negroes who have been reared in the South, and know the old traditions, are law-abiding citizens with comfortable homes, good schools, fine churches, and every chance to be prosperous and contented.

A NARROW ESCAPE

A NARROW ESCAPE

ONE bright, beautiful day, we were all made happy by a visit from the oldest son of the family, a surgeon in the Confederate army. The river, winding almost around the plantation, was "up to its banks" from recent heavy rains, all the bridges had been destroyed, and we felt comparatively safe from the Federals on the other side, though Baton Rouge was only nine miles away. The Doctor, who wore Confederate gray ornamented with Louisiana pelican buttons, rode a fine large horse, which he left in the stables some distance from the house.

Sitting around the broad fireplace

70 *How Beauty Was Saved*

in mother's room, talking of the home people and the war, we were enjoying the unexpected visit, when one of the girls chanced to look out through the south door. She turned very pale, and exclaimed, "Look at the soldiers!" All around the kitchen, talking to the servants, and all over the grounds were Federal soldiers on horseback.

What was to be done? If our brother was captured it meant imprisonment to the end of the war, and perhaps death. When he realized the situation, for he had been near the door and knew they had come for him and were questioning the servants, he dropped on his knees, crept into a small room adjoining, where two of us pulled off his gray coat and replaced it by an old one from the wardrobe, gave him a book, and

someone whispered, "Go into the guest-chamber and wait. Take these old trousers with you." He slipped into the quiet room, and taking a seat by the window, and opening the book, assumed the rôle of an invalid. Then we hastily concealed the Confederate uniform, but where we put it I can never remember. It was securely hidden.

By that time the Federal officers and some of the men were in the house looking around with curiosity, but they offered no explanation about their call. There were five or six bright, pretty girls in the house, and, contrary to our usual custom, we chatted with the officers and used all our attractive powers to keep them in front of the house and on the broad veranda. Our attentions seemed to please them, and the private soldiers

72 *How Beauty Was Saved*

were quietly ordered out and were not allowed to search for and appropriate valuables as they usually did.

In a little while the Federals, the girls, and the family were all engaged in pleasant conversation on the piazza overlooking the beautiful flower-yard and the lovely, peaceful scene. Someone quietly stole back to the prisoner's room, told him the chance to escape had come, gave him an old hat, and helped him get out of the window near the garden, a garden bordered by a dense hedge. Then the messenger returned to the group on the porch, and we chatted gaily, while our hearts were beating with excitement and anxiety for the fugitive.

After some time the soldiers began to mount their horses, the servant having told us in the mean time that the Yankees had the Doctor's horse.

We concluded that the fugitive would need his horse to get back to Port Hudson, if he had escaped, and we felt encouraged to believe he had, and we determined we would try to save the horse also. Two of us requested the Colonel to step into the parlor, as we wished to speak to him. He looked a little suspicious and seemed ill at ease when he had entered the room and the door was closed. The large, beautiful room with its heavy furniture, its bright brass andirons, its elegant pictures and wealth of flowers seemed harmless enough, and one of the girls was beautiful and bewitching, so he braved the danger (if there were danger!) and asked what he could do for us. We told him a fine horse had been taken out of our stables by his men; that we needed the animal as

74 *How Beauty Was Saved*

we were fond of horseback riding, and only the old carriage horses were left to us. He said he was sorry to refuse our polite request, but his men had seen the army saddle and bridle; that it looked like a "U. S." horse,—in fact, was branded "U. S.,"—and under the circumstances he would be obliged to take him.

All this time our soldier-brother was hurrying across fields and woods, hills and valleys to the banks of the river, which meant safety on the other side. The officer, as I remember across the long years now passed, enjoyed the novelty of his position and looked with interest and a touch of sympathy at the Southern home and the piquant Southern girls. When he returned to the veranda the soldiers mounted their horses, gave us a respectful salute, and galloped

down the broad avenue. When they reached the gate a large flock of geese, about a hundred, furiously attacked the enemy; their horses reared and plunged, and the "rank and file" were so angry because they had not been allowed any spoils, that they unsheathed their swords and, leaning over as far as they could, cut off the heads of some of our bravest ganders—the officers sitting erect, and trying to look grave. It was an amusing sight. "They routed them, they scouted them, nor lost a single man!"

When all had gone we sent a boy in haste to the ford of the river to find out about our soldier. He had crossed the swollen stream in a rude dug-out with board paddles, and was safe, safe on the other side.

